
UNIT 1 LAND RELATIONS IN PRE-BRITISH INDIA

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

On going through this unit, you will be able to explain:

- the nature of land relations during the pre-British rule, particularly the Mughal period;
- the presence of intermediaries between the state and the peasant; and
- regional variations in revenue collection arrangements and property rights.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is true that technological factors such as fertilizers, HYV seeds, controlled irrigation and scientific implements play an important role in agricultural development. But ‘institutional factors’ such as owner or tenant cultivation, absentee landlordism, indebtedness of the cultivators, etc. also play a significant role in stimulating or obstructing agricultural growth. In fact, application of technology in agriculture itself substantially depends upon the kind of institutions, which exist in a particular region. The more successful forms of peasant agriculture appear to have emerged where owner-cultivation was dominant. It is observed that the green revolution technology has been more successful in *ryotwari* and *mahalwari* areas dominated by peasant proprietors. And since the existing tenurial structure is the result of gradual process of evolution, influenced by social, political and economic factors, it becomes essential to look into the process of evolution of tenurial structure.

In this unit we will discuss some of the basic issues related to ownership and cultivation of land during the pre-British India. During that period land was relatively abundant compared to demand. Moreover, wasteland was easily available for reclamation in some areas. In this environment some basic issues arise: whether the owner cultivated his land or leased it out; whether the owner was allowed to sell his land; whether land was inheritable or not; how land tax was collected from the cultivator; what percentage of the agricultural produce was collected as tax; and what the punishment was for non-payment of tax.

1.2 LAND TENURE SYSTEM IN PRE-MUGHAL PERIOD

We cannot hold a detailed discussion of land tenure system in the pre-Mughal India in the present course. However, before giving an account of the tenurial system of the mughal period, it is worthwhile to have a brief idea about the nature of ownership of land during ancient period.

The question of ownership in land has been discussed by economic historians and their conclusions are largely confined to two options, the state or peasant ownership. Various combinations of the state's and the peasant's rights have also been suggested. It is argued that the proprietorship in land originated with the act of *reclamation*, and the peasant who reclaimed and converted the forest into arable land became the proprietor of that land. The king did not have any property right in land except the right to a share of the produce in return for 'affording protection to his subjects'. However, D. N. Jha argues that an individual proprietor exercised only a qualified ownership over his land, the king being its ultimate lord. On the other hand, Irfan Habib accepts the existence of private property in land but at the same time notes that peasant did not have the right to free *alienation* of land. But most scholars agree that the peasants held permanent and heritable occupancy rights in land and the king was not expected to evict them. In those early days, cultivation of land was strongly insisted upon. The individual peasant enjoyed the right of use as long as he cultivated the land. Sir Henry Maine points out that each family had the duty of submitting to the common rules of cultivation and pasturage. Grazing ground and forest tracts adjoining the village were the common ownership of the entire village community.

The revenue paid by the peasants was generally a share of the produce. The method adopted was either through actual division of the peasant's produce or state's share was estimated by inspection of the growing crop. Even sometimes an average or standard figure was determined for the state's share from the unit area of each crop. The collection of revenue was generally through various officers. They were authorized by the king to collect state's share of revenue and to retain a portion of it as payment for their services. Gradually, these offices became hereditary. Consequently, layers of intermediaries developed between the state and the cultivators.

1.3 LAND TENURE SYSTEM DURING MUGHAL PERIOD

The discussion in this section is in general relevant for the whole of Mughal India. But, particularly, it conforms more to the northern and central parts where Mughal rule was more entrenched. Distinguishing features of land tenure systems in other regions will be investigated later in the sections on Eastern, Western and Southern India. We will discuss two aspects, viz., land tenure and taxation on land. Both these aspects are not independent of each other, which makes the identification of different types of land rights in India difficult. So to understand the land tenure structure we will start our discussion with land revenue system.

1.3.1 Land Revenue System

The simplest form of land revenue was crop sharing. From this simple sharing, we can trace the evolution of other systems of assessment, which were designed to reduce the burden of work and expenses for the Mughal administration. One such method of assessment was *Kankut* (Kan = grain, Kut = estimate). Initially under this method production of each crop was estimated first by estimating yield per unit of land at the current harvest and then multiplying it with area under that crop. Tax was calculated on the basis of the proportion it was supposed to bear to the produce. Later on, to remove the discretion of officials, the *Kankut* was modified into *Zabt* (measurement) where instead of leaving the yield to be fixed at each harvest, a standard schedule for different crops was promulgated for a longer period. During Akbar's time, on the basis of detailed information collected for the period of ten years on yields, prices, and areas cultivated for each locality, the revenue rates were fixed directly in cash for each crop. However, in addition to this standard system of cash revenue, other methods of assessment such as crop-sharing (*batai*) and *Kankut*, continued in certain villages or for certain crops. Moreover, during crop failure, due concession was made in collection of tax in 'crop-less' areas.

Whatever may be the methods of assessment and collection, one major aim of the Mughal administration, according to Irfan Habib, was to take away the bulk of the peasant's surplus. The shares of the crop taken under the '*batai*' or *Kankut* varied with crops and localities. The norm seems to be one-half in the less fertile regions, and substantially more in the more fertile regions.

In Northern India, the unit of assessment was the village. The revenue due from a village was fixed with reference to its productive capacity usually for the year. But this sum was not distributed by assessors over the individual peasants. Inside the village the individual peasants contributed to this revenue on the basis of one or other of the familiar systems - either on an estimate of the produce gathered, or by rates on the area sown, or by lump sum payable for the land holding.

The collection of revenue was enforced by several methods. Non-payment of revenue was deemed equivalent to rebellion. While eviction was not unknown as a punishment, the more usual method seems to have been imprisonment and torture of the village headmen, followed by the massacre of the adult male population and enslavement of women and children.

1.3.2 Intermediaries and Land Rights

Theoretically the king was the sole claimant to the land revenue. But, as a matter of fact, the assessment and collection of the revenue was largely through the members of a small ruling class. Large areas of cultivated land were given to them revenue-free; and where revenue was levied on their land it was often at substantially lower rates. We discuss below about the intermediaries.

1.3.3 The Jagirdars

The *jagirdars* were the king's officers enjoying land-gifts. These were the persons who held ranks (*mansabs*) granted by the emperor. Each rank entitled its holder (*mansabdar*) to a particular amount of pay which was usually met by assigning an area (*Jagir*) that was officially estimated to yield an equivalent amount of the revenue. These ranks (*mansabs*) were not inheritable, though it was normal practice to allow the relations of higher *mansab*-holders to continue with their *mansabs*. The temporary character of *Jagir* strengthened the control of the emperor over the *Jagirdars*. According to Abul Fazal, a *mansab*-holder was entitled to a *Jagir*, but not to a particular tract of land in *Jagir*, and not the same land year after year. The *mansabs* (and hence *Jagirs*) were revised from time to time to award promotions or demotions.

Thus it seems that a *Jagirdar* had no permanent rights on his assigned area. Theoretically his claims were also confined to the authorised land-revenue and taxes. But, in practice, the *Jagirdar* was a much more powerful person specially if he happened to be a big assignee enjoying police jurisdiction as well. In fact, a large proportion of land was under such *Jagirs*. It is estimated that, in 1646, a mere sixty-eight princes and nobles at the top claimed 36.6 per cent of the total revenue demand of the empire and the next 587 officials claimed nearly 25 per cent. The remaining 7,555 *mansab*-holders claimed between a quarter and a third of the revenues. Thus the larger portion of the land lay within *Jagirs*.

In Irfan Habib's opinion, it was within the powers of a *Jagirdar* to remove a zamindar. As for peasants, the *Jagirdars* claimed powers to detain them to land, like serfs, and bring them back, if they ran away. It is widely believed that in the later period of Mughal empire the *Jagirdars* resorted to oppression and extortion of the peasants because, unsure of holding particular areas for a longer time they had no regard for the long-term prospects of revenue collection.

As mentioned earlier, during Mughal period, revenue demand was very high and more than half of the gross produce was taken away from the peasants. Though peasants held permanent and heritable occupancy rights in land, bulk of the agricultural produce of the empire was placed in the hands of numerically very small class of *jagirdars*.

1.3.4 The Zamindars

The *Zamindar* is a Persian term which means holder of land (*zamin*). The frequent use of this term began from Akbar's time onwards for any person with any hereditary claim to a direct share in the peasant's produce. The basic right of *Zamindar* was his claim to impose certain levies on the peasants over and above the land-revenue assessment. Irfan Habib also refers to other cesses and perquisites of *Zamindars* such as house tax and levies on forest and water produce, since these are specified among the rights transferred in *zamindari* sale deeds.

Though claims of *zamindars* were originally distinct from land revenue, the role assigned to them in the Mughal revenue system tended to blur these distinctions. In a large part of the Mughal empire, the *Zamindar* was expected to collect the tax from the primary cultivators, in return for an allowance of one-tenth of the collections, given either in cash or in allotment of revenue-free land.

The zamindars often claimed to derive their rights from settling a village and distributing its lands among the peasantry. Theoretically, they also had the right to evict peasants, but land being more abundant than labour in practice the right to evict the peasant had much less significance.

In Irfan Habib's opinion the *zamindari* right was in itself an article of property. It was inherited according to the same laws and customs as governed the inheritance of other property. *Zamindari* right was also freely sold. Some *zamindaris* were actually mortgaged to professional money-leaders. Provision for transfer of *Zamindari* rights also enabled persons who had accumulated wealth out of the extraction of land revenue, such as petty officials, revenue grantees, etc., to transform themselves into *zamindars*. But it was rare to find merchants buying up *zamindaris*.

Zamindar and peasant-held villages were found side by side in the same district in Mughal empire. Even sometime in a peasant village, Mughal administration created new *zamindaris*. During the decline of Mughal empire, *zamindari* rights was created even by force. Sometimes peasants of a village also sold away their rights to a person, who became the zamindar of that village. At the same time, there are numerous instances of fresh villages being settled without the intermediation of zamindars.

Thus during the Mughal period two groups of revenue extractors, viz., jagirdars and zamindars, whose involvement in agricultural production was almost nil, were of enormous importance. What the producer was supposed to pay was fixed in law by imperial regulations. What was actually taken depended on the power and inclinations of *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*. During the declining days of the Mughal empire this system became quite oppressive.

1.3.5 The Village Community

A notable feature of village life in pre-British period was the combination of agricultural work with manufacturing processes with an unalterable division of labour. Production was mainly for direct use and the surplus after payment of revenue was marketed. Relationship of the village with town was one way and it hardly received anything in return and provided for almost all of its needs from within the village. Normally the peasants of the village claimed the same ancestry and so belonged to the same brotherhood (*bhaichara*). This fraternity by invoking ties of blood bound the peasants in unity far stronger than could have been expected among mere neighbors. Authority in the village was exercised by a group of elders, traditionally a council of five persons, the *Panchayat*.

But the earlier contention that peasants had common ownership in land is disputed by many scholars. It is suggested that the individual families had their separate holdings and only the forest and grazing grounds were held commonly. Of course there were certain other spheres, outside production, where peasants acted collectively. In the village every peasant paid his share into the common financial pool from which the land-revenue, the demands of officials, the repayment of any common loan (specially raised during natural calamities to pay the part or whole of the land revenue of the village), and expenses for the economic, social, and even spiritual benefit of the village were met. Even in the case of abandoning of a village and migration to some other areas, villagers normally decided collectively.

Views also differ over the homogeneous nature of peasantry. Economic differentiation within the peasantry had emerged during the Mughal period. Irfan Habib point out that in Northern India as well as in other parts of the Mughal empire there were some large cultivators raising crops for the market; and there were small peasants, who could barely produce foodgrains for their own subsistence. Beyond this differentiation among the peasantry, there was still sharper division on the basis of caste. Depending upon their resources in seed, cattle and money, peasants might cultivate larger or smaller plots. But larger land holdings were linked to, and often resulted from, superior position or status secured either as headmen (*muqaddams*) or as members belonging to dominant elements of the village (*kalantran*), in contrast to the small peasantry (*rezariaya*). The village headmen often had revenue-free allotments, amounting to 2½ per cent of the total, and the superior elements were often assessed at lower rates of revenue than ordinary peasants.

Another source of strength of the rich peasantry was associated with the land-revenue system. The basic units of revenue assessment and collection being a village, it was natural for the revenue authorities to rely upon the headmen or a small group of upper peasants. This dominant group fixed tax rates for each peasant, collected it, and put it in a pool. From this pool the land revenue would be paid, so also certain other common expenses including the fees and perquisites of certain officials. Those who controlled the pool usually evaded paying their own due share of revenue. Lower rates were also levied upon some favoured elements. The smaller peasants, forming the bulk of the peasantry, were thus called upon to pay more than their due share of the revenue in order to make up the total. Thus the internal contradictions started emerging within the peasant communities.

1.3.6 The Peasant and the Ownership of Land

Now let us consider the crucial question of who was the landowner. This was the question which, after the conquest of India, British administrators addressed to themselves. In fact in the years preceeding the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, the English circulated some questionnaires with a view to eliciting ‘official’ opinion concerning various land rights. The question most often asked was “who is the owner of the land-the ruler (*hakim*) or the *zamindar*?” It will be noticed that the question as formulated excluded the peasants from consideration altogether.

However, most of the scholars today agree with the view that king was not the owner. Numerous Mughal government documents refer to private persons as owners (*maliks*), holding *malkiyat* or ownership of land. In Aurangzeb’s *farman* to Muhammad Hashim the terms *maliks* and *arbab-i-zamin* (landowners) are clearly used for ordinary cultivators or peasants. But the crux of the matter really is whether the substance, not merely the name, of the peasant’s right was such as to deserve the application of the term ‘proprietary’ in its strict juridical sense.

On the one hand, there was general recognition of the peasant’s title to permanent and hereditary occupancy of the land he tilled. In case he was found incapable of cultivating land or had abandoned it altogether, land was given to another peasant for cultivation. But if at any time, the malik recovered his ability to cultivate it or came back to it, the land was to be resorted to him. On the other hand, there was no question of really free alienation, which is an essential feature of modern proprietary right. The readiness with which authorities recognized the peasant’s right of occupancy and the anxiety they showed to prevent him from leaving the land were both natural in an age when land was abundant and peasants scarce. Sale of land might also not be possible because there was no scarcity of land and the revenue burden was quite heavy. The peasant, in such a situation, might not often succeed in finding buyers. The peasants thus enjoyed the permanent and hereditary right of occupancy but did not possess the right of free alienation.

In fact, the rights which in aggregate constitute ownership, in the true sense of the word, were not as a rule vested in one-person, but were distributed irregularly among the various parties connected with the land. Moreover, the collapse of the Mughal administration had produced an environment in which might (force) counted more than right. The interests were traditionally multiple and the notion of an absolute and exclusive form of proprietorship was alien to India.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Why is it that the peasant ownership of land during Mughal Period is so debatable?
Answer in 50 words.
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2) Point out the features of the Indian village community during the pre-British period in 3 sentences.

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3) State whether True or False:

- i) During Mughal period more than half of the gross produce was taken away as revenue.
- ii) It was within the power of a *zamindar* to remove a *jagirdar*.
- iii) In the Mughal regime both *zamindar* and peasant ownership were prevalent.
- iv) During the Mughal period revenue actually taken away was more than that fixed by imperial law, depending upon the power of the intermediaries.

1.4 LAND RELATIONS IN EASTERN INDIA

The investigation of land relations during Mughal period in Bengal is of particular interest, because it was here that the early British administrators acquired the terminology which they carried with them to the North. Bengal stood apart from other provinces because the revenue system in force here was the one known as *mugtai*, a fixed demand. The revenue was levied in cash, at rates per unit of land, or in lump sums covering entire villages, the same amount being levied year after year, until, as a special measure, there might be a revision or enhancement. According to James Grant, initially the revenue demand fixed in 1582 by Todar Mal represented around one-fourth of the average produce. In 1658 there was an enhancement of 13 per cent. After that successive levies were made on the *zamindars* in the form of *cess*, although the basic demand remained unchanged. But Moreland does not agree with James Grant’s account, specially, his statement that the basis of assessment was one-fourth of the produce. Moreland considers that in Todar Mal’s time the state’s claim was uniformly one-third.

Unlike northern India, in Bengal the imposition of revenue-demand was not upon the peasants but upon the *zamindars*. Bengal *zamindars* were different from the *zamindars* in other parts of Mughal empire. Here the zamindar was called upon to answer for the payment of land revenue within the area of his *zamindari*. He collected the land tax (or rent) from the peasant at rates fixed by custom or by himself and paid the amount imposed upon him by the administration. The balance left with him constituted his income. In other parts of the Mughal empire the zamindar was expected to collect cash and allot revenue-free land.

Land revenue system in Assam, which had evolved during the long *Ahom rule* (1228-1818) was entirely different. According to B. Chaudhuri, under Ahom rule the payment of revenue in the form of cash or produce was of a limited extent. The fiscal system in Ahom rule was based on labour services of the entire community, mostly in connection with the defence of the kingdom as the Ahoms had no regular standing army. Occasionally, people were engaged for the maintenance of public works also. The male population was divided into groups called *khels*, each *khel* being further divided into smaller units (*gots*), composed of three to four males (*paiks*). In times

of peace only one *paik* of each *got* served the state, usually for three or four months in a year, the other members looking after the cultivation of his land. During wars all the male members were called up, with the women and children looking after the entire cultivation. Each *paik* family, in return for such services, got free of rent two *puras* (about 2.66 acres) of wet land, in addition to a piece of land, also rent free, suitable for homestead or garden, and could add to its holding by reclamation of wasteland where this was plentiful. The *Ahom* king entrusted the administration and the defence of the realm to the Assamese aristocracy. The economic power of this group was largely derived from the income from their rent-free estate, which were worked mostly by servants and also partly by free *paiks*.

1.5 WESTERN INDIA: LAND REVENUE AND RIGHTS

Western India comprises roughly the narrow coastal area from the Rann of Kutch to north Kanarah, the wide flat Gujarat plains and the Deccan Plateau. Most of this region had been under Mughal empire.

1.5.1 Land Revenue

As described by H. Fukazawa, in this region, the village agricultural land was normally divided into (1) ordinary owned land (*miras jamin*) (2) gifted or exempted land (*inam jamin*) (3) state land (*khalsa jamin*) and (4) land of extinct families (*gat kul jamin*) or wasteland.

In the official documents a distinction is made between the imposition upon *miras* land to be paid to the state and that upon *inam* land to be paid by tenants to inam holders. The former imposition was called land tax (*sera*) while the latter was called rent (*dhara*). Similarly imposition upon the *khalsa* land as well as *newly* cultivated wasteland was also termed *dhara*. But in actual practice this distinction may not be much significant because land revenue, whether tax or rent, was as a rule assessed and levied in cash on different soils and different crops through very complicated procedure. Revenue was sometimes also assessed on crop-sharing basis. Shivaji fixed the revenue burden between one-third to two fifths of the produce. In general, the revenue rate was gradually increased during the eighteenth century due to the financial difficulties of the Peshwa government. Of course, Brahmans and government officials were usually treated with special favour in revenue matters under the Peshwas. On the other hand, the Maratha government also encouraged the extension of cultivation to wastelands by offering various favorable terms to the peasants especially to the *aparts* (temporary peasants) of other regions.

A large portion of the revenue was more or less assigned temporarily to the state officials and aristocrats as their salary. The officials responsible for the collection of revenue from the village headmen in their assigned areas were hereditary chiefs called *desmukhs* (desai in Gujarat) and hereditary accountants, *despande*. They were often called *zamindars* in the official documents. In the Deccan Muslims kingdom the assignees widely exercised administrative authorities over their assigned territories. However, when the Mughals conquered the Deccan during the seventeenth century they successfully curbed such authority and specified the amount to be collected.

1.5.2 Land Rights

Fairly complete private ownership was recognized in *miras* land as well as *inam* land. Maratha government never forfeited *miras* land for failure to pay the land revenue, but had to resort instead to temporary possession of the land, imprisonment of the *mirasdar*, or collection from other *mirasdars*. Some scholars are of the view that

government could not increase the land revenue on miras lands; but since it could always levy additional cesses, and frequently did, this theoretical prohibition had not much force. *Inam* land, on which the land revenue was very low, was held by temples, village officials, artisans and servants. When land-holding families died, their land lapsed to the village and were treated like the wasteland of the village. The village headman (*patil*) might convert this land into *miras* land for himself or the village assembly could gift it to some willing peasants or sell it as *miras* land. In addition to it, state land was also in abundance all over Maharashtra.

In each village there were hereditary village officers such as headman (*patil*), accountant (*kulkarni*) and assistant headman (*chaugula*). These officers used to own more or less large *miras* land. They were allowed by the government to have some *inam* land as well. Moreover, they were entitled to receive some amount of produce from peasants and village artisans. Their office and accompanying *inam* land as well as privileges were called *watan*. This was not only heritable but saleable and transferable with the acknowledgement of state authorities and village assembly. A second group of people in the village was proprietary peasants called *mirasdars*. Mirasdar peasants, mostly *kunbis* by caste, were permanent resident of the village and paid both the regular revenue and miscellaneous cesses for the state on their miras land.

A third group in the village was of *upari* (literally ‘stranger’) peasants or tenants. They were temporary residents of the village, who had left their home village due to famine, devastation caused by wars, etc. and became migratory. The *upari*’s assessment could be raised from year to year, and his tenancy terminated at the end of the annual lease. They had no hereditary claims to the land, no matter how long they or their families might have been in cultivation, nor could they take part in governing village affairs. However, according to some scholars, they were only a small minority of peasants in the seventeenth century.

Lastly, village servants and artisans called *balutedars* were also a part of the village population. Their composition was fairly uniform though number varied according to the size of the village. They were expected to serve villagers whenever required in their respective capacities fixed by their castes, and were paid the remunerations at the time of two harvests of the year, usually in kind. Besides many of them were given by the village a small plot of *inam* land which was as a rule cultivated by themselves.

1.6 SOUTH INDIA: LAND REVENUE AND TENANCY

South India comprises roughly the present states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka (but excluding north Kanara, Belgaum and Bijapur, formerly part of Bombay presidency), Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Marathwada district of Maharashtra. Political boundaries shifted rapidly in this region in the eighteenth century. By 1772 nearly all of south India was under three Muslim rulers: the Nizam in the north (Hyderabad state), the Nawab of Carnatic in the south-east and Haider Ali in Mysore and parts of Kerala. Only Travancore and Thanjavur were under Hindu rulers.

1.6.1 Land Revenue

Not much information is available about pre-British modes of taxing the peasantry in southern parts of India. But at the village level the revenue was collected through the village headmen and village accountant. In many *mirasdari* areas, there were no hereditary village headmen and the mirasdars as a group performed the function of revenue collection. There is, however, a controversy whether these taxes were paid to the king, local chieftain or local assembly. The political turmoil of the eighteenth century also added to this confusion. Zamindars behaved as independent rulers.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century they were occasionally joined by Europeans. In 1800, the year before the company took over Tirunelveli, the Nawab mortgaged several villages to a European who collected the land revenue and threw the defaulters into prison.

1.6.2 Land Tenure Structure

Agarian structure in pre-British south India was quite complex with many variations. One important reason for these variations was availability or non-availability of water. Agrarian structure was more stratified in coastal areas where yields were high and risks were relatively low. These were the regions which could afford to support large temples, settlements of Brahmins and a variety of artisans to whom *inam* lands were given which were either free of revenue or lightly assessed. *Inam* lands were also given to village officials who were generally more powerful in the dry areas.

According to Dharma Kumar, one special feature of the south Indian scene was the existence, particularly in the irrigated Tamil plains and some Telugu areas, of communal system of holdings, especially in the Brahmin settlements. In these villages, the holdings were expressed as shares of the total. The shareholders had the right to cultivate their shares and also to participate in the management of village lands leased out, and in the profits from the orchards, forests, tanks and other property held in common, in proportion to their shares. The shares did not necessarily specify a particular plot of land, specially in those villages where the lands allotted to each shareholder for cultivation were periodically redistributed. Though these shareholders acted collectively in certain matters, yet their cultivation was almost always individually organised. These shareholders were called *mirasdars* (having hereditary rights in land) in the revenue records. During the eighteenth century their holdings were very unequal in size, whatever might have been their original distribution. In almost every village there were a few large landholders; as dominant landlords.

1.6.3 Tenancy

Because Brahmins were forbidden to touch the plough, the lands of Brahmin landholders were cultivated by others. Even in the case of some large non-Brahmin landholders, lands were leased out. Many landholders with small holdings and the landless with a pair of bullocks and a plough acted as tenants on these lands. The terms of tenancy differed in different cases. The main distinction was between the resident of the village (*ulkudi*) and the outsider (*parakudi*). The *ulkudi* had greater security of tenure, sometimes even hereditary rights of occupancy. The *parakudi* generally had yearly leases. The rent was normally a share of the gross produce though occasionally fixed amounts of cash or kind per acre were also paid. On wet lands the rents usually ranged from 50 to 82 per cent of the gross produce, after deduction of the land revenue. Most commonly, in Thanjavur, it was between two-thirds to three-fourths of the gross crop. Rental shares varied with the security of tenancy, the element of risk and cost sharing arrangements between the landlord and tenant. In fact, sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between a labourer and a sharecropper receiving a fifth or less of the crop.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How was land revenue assessed in Western India?
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2) Who were the intermediaries in land tenure system in Eastern India?

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3) State whether True or False:

- i) In Bengal, *zamindars* collected the tax on land.
- ii) Paiks were part of the *zamindari* system.
- iii) Brahmins in south India cultivated the land themselves.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the prevailing institutional land relation structure growth during the pre-British period. The land tenure system has not been uniform over time and space throughout India. The property rights and rights to alienation have been controversial issues. But most scholars agree that the peasants held permanent and heritable occupancy in land and the king was not expected to evict them. The peasant had to submit a part of the produce as tax. This extraction from the peasant, although invariably on the higher side, became exorbitant with the creation of various layers of intermediaries.

1.8 KEY WORDS

Alienation	:	It refers, in this context, to the transfer (may be through sale or inheritance) of title to property from one person or organisation to another.
Reclamation	:	The restoration of natural resources, such as land, to productive use. Examples may be reclaiming deserts through irrigation and forests, and reclaiming eroded fields and hillsides through proper cultivation and replanting, etc.
Rental	:	Rent, in a broader sense, is the payment for the use of a resource, whether it be land, labour, equipment, ideas or even money. Typically the rent of labour is called ‘wages’, the payment for the use of land and equipment is called ‘rent’; the payment for the use of an idea is called a ‘royalty’ and the payment for use of money is called ‘interest’. Rental is the amount of rent paid or received. The rental of estates, for example, refers to the rent to be paid for the use of it.

1.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Dharma Kumar and Meghnad Desai (Eds.), 1982, *The Cambridge Economic History of India* Vol. II, Cambridge University Press. (Chs. I and II.)

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1.10 ANSWERS OR HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 1.3.6 and answer.
- 2) See Sub-section 1.3.5. Bring out the main characteristics.
- 3) i) True ii) False iii) True iv) True

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 1.5.1 and answer.
- 2) See section 1.4 and answer.
- 3) i) True ii) False iii) False